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## Relative Effectiveness of ‘General line Teachers’ and ‘Rehbar-e-Talim Teachers’ in Jammu and Kashmir

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### **Abstract:**

Since the implementation of the Rehbar-e-Talim scheme (para teacher scheme) in the Jammu and Kashmir state in the year 2000, the main focus of the government has remained on the engagement of these ReT teachers at elementary level by cutting out costs. Although, the hiring conditions, tenure and remuneration of these teachers vary from General line teachers, the use of Rehbar-e-Talim teachers (para-teachers) has sparked debate about their impact on the quality of education. In this paper an attempt has been made to know the relative effectiveness of General line teachers and Rehbar-e-Talim teachers having different terms and conditions for engagement at elementary level. The study finds that the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers (para teachers) overall perform better than the General line teachers. This may be due to the higher qualification of these teachers, accountability pressure from locals like members of VEC or due to congenial relationship with students for being locals.

**Keywords: General line teachers, Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and Relative effectiveness.**

### **Introduction**

A central feature of reforms in primary schooling in India over past few decades has been the provision of low-cost ‘para’ teachers. Its origin may be traced to the ‘Shiksha Karmi Project’ in the state of Rajasthan, undertaken in the 1980s with support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Use of para teachers in primary schools increased rapidly in India since the mid-1990s. Schemes like ‘Shiksha Karmi Project’ of Rajasthan, ‘Guruji’ of Madhya Pradesh, ‘Vidhya Sahayak’ of Gujarat, ‘Shikshan Sevaks’ of Maharashtra and ‘Rehbar-e-Talim’ of Jammu and Kashmir consider the appointment of para-teachers as an interim measure to meet the financial dearth of the state. Despite the fact that hiring conditions, tenure, remuneration, and qualifications vary considerably across states, the use of para-teachers has generated debate about their impact on the quality of elementary education and suggests that despite poorer training, para-teachers may be more cost-effective than regular teachers (Kingdon, 2010).

The underlying belief behind the hiring of para-teachers in schools has been that a local person appointed as teacher is better able to establish a good rapport with the local community and assist directly students in classrooms (Monzo and Rueda, 2001). But in India, the rationale behind the appointment of para teachers is to meet constitutional obligation of free and compulsory education to each and every child of the country in the six to 14 years age group; expanding access to schooling in remote and unserved areas; eliminating single-teacher schools and relieving multi-grade teaching; and reducing high pupil teacher ratios in an affordable and economical ways.

Para-teachers are generally local youths and the minimum educational qualification is senior secondary, i.e. 12 years of school education Pre-service training is not necessary for these teachers. These teachers are generally appointed by local committees like Village Education Committees, and hence, are accountable to them. They have to undergo a mandatory induction level training—the duration of which varies from 20 to 40 days and are given a fixed honorarium which is one fourth or even more of what a regular teacher is paid for the same work (in case of J&K, there is DIET induction programme of 15 days for newly appointed Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and a fixed honorarium of Rs 3000/- only for a period of five years and is one seventh of the general line teacher).

Although the para teacher schemes vary across states, against regular teachers' whom are having lifetime employment guarantees, para teachers usually have renewable contracts. Para teachers are not required to have pre-service teacher training and the educational qualification requirements are also lower than those for regular teachers. In J&K, rehbar-e-talim teachers are regularized after the completion of first five years and the minimum qualification for both 'General line' and 'Rehbar-e- Talim' teachers is senior secondary level, i-e, 10+2 and both the teachers at this level are not required to have professional trainings (JRM-TE, 2013).

Despite the belief that para-teachers are usually less qualified than regular teachers, in reality, the academic qualifications of para-teachers are overall higher than those of regular teachers. For instance, only 14.5% of para-teachers in primary schools have "secondary or less" qualifications but among the regular teacher group, the same proportion is 26.4%, and the percentage of para-teachers that have graduate and postgraduate qualifications is similar to the percentage of regular teachers with these qualifications (Kingdon. 2010).

Despite the fact that hiring conditions, tenure, remuneration, and qualifications vary considerably across states, the use of para-teachers has generated debate about their impact on the quality of elementary education and is one of the most worrying policy issues in Indian basic education. On the one hand, use of para teachers reduces pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs), eliminate single teacher schools, lower the cost of providing elementary education and increase teacher accountability to local (parents, VECs), and on the other hand, due to lower professional training and supposedly lower educational qualifications of para-teachers (compared to regular teachers), and also the dual salary structure whereby para-teachers are paid much lower salaries than regular teachers within the same schools raises the educational quality and equity concerns (Govinda and Josephine, 2004; Kumar, et al, 2001; Saroj Panday, 2006; Kingdon 2010).

The relative effectiveness of regular and para teachers is not clear and there is contradiction in research findings about para teachers and their affect on the quality of education. Studies carried out by authors like Pandey and Raj Rani (2003), and Govinda and Josephine (2004) highlighted the poor quality of these teachers, whereas, PROBE (1999) study reported that despite their lower qualifications and salaries Shiksha Karmis (sometimes) work distinctly harder than regular teachers because of the hope to get regularized in the future, accountability to local community, and their training and support. In sum, it cannot be presumed that there is lot of debate about the effectiveness of para teachers and regular government school teachers. Their relative effectiveness is empirical issue worthy of examination.

### **Clarification of terms**

#### **Effectiveness**

In this study, it wraps the meaning of the quality of education imparted by the teachers and is limited to academic achievements of the students.

#### **General line Teachers (Regular teachers)**

Teachers appointed in accordance with the norms of SSRB (Service Selection Recruiting Board).

#### **Rehbar-e-Talim Teachers (Para teachers)**

The appointment of teachers deviated from the past practices in the State referred as Para-teachers. Rehbar-e-Talim teachers (ReT) are locals and are appointed in their own locality. The hiring conditions, tenure and remunerations of these teachers vary from General line teachers.

## Methodology

The objective of this study is to compare the relative effectiveness of Rehbar-e- Taleem Teachers (Para-Teachers) and Regular Teachers in J&K state and to know the understanding of these teachers in their teaching subject and teaching method. The sample of the study comprised of randomly selected six government elementary schools, having both types of teachers. Out of these teachers three ReT teachers and three General line teachers, teaching similar kind of subjects at the same level were taken for the study. The schools were selected for the study at the district Ganderbal in J&K state. Besides, three classes of each teacher were observed in literacy (Urdu) and numeracy (Mathematics). Thus, total of 36 classes were observed and analyzed them as per the observation schedule.

As the study was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, the techniques used for the data collection includes: The academic achievement of the students in literacy (Urdu) and numeracy (Mathematics) of the last three years from the school records and Observation schedule for the classroom interaction. The observation schedule includes items like previous knowledge testing, introduction of the concept, use of activity by teacher, relevancy of activity to that of content, arrangement of aids and materials etc.

## Results and Findings

### Quantitative mode of analysis

**Table 1A: Group Statistics by using SPSS**

Subject/ year	Teacher type	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
Math (2011)	ReT	36	55.80	10.39	1.479	.144	Insignificant
	GT	39	52.48	9.03			
Urdu (2011)	ReT	36	55.47	8.61	1.719	.090	Insignificant
	GT	39	51.92	9.21			

**ReT – Rehbar-e-Talim teacher**

**GT – General Line teacher**

From table 1A, the data collected for the year 2011, shows that the mean scores of the achievement tests in Mathematics of the students who were taught by the General line teachers and Rehbar-e-Talim teachers is 52.48 and 55.80, and the mean scores in Urdu of the students

taught by the General line teachers and Rehbar-e-Talim teachers is 51.92 and 55.47, which shows that the performance of students taught by Rehbar-e-Talim teachers is better than students taught by the General line teachers. The p value for the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and General line teachers for the subject of Mathematics and Urdu is .144 and .090 respectively. For the difference of two means to be significant, the p-value should be equal or less than alpha 0.05, but p-value of .144 and .090 are greater than alpha 0.05, which is statistically insignificant and hence it can be deduced that the two groups, i-e, the students taught by the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and the students taught by the General Line teachers, does not differ significantly in terms of the marks obtained by them.

**Table 2A: Group Statistics by using SPSS**

Subject/ year	Teacher type	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
Math (2012)	ReT	36	58.80	10.51	1.943	.056	Significant
	GT	39	54.48	8.71			
Urdu (2012)	ReT	36	57.97	7.89	1.900	.061	Insignificant
	GT	39	54.07	9.68			

**ReT – Rehbar-e-Talim teacher**

**GT – General Line teacher**

For the year 2012, the mean scores of the achievement tests in Mathematics of the students who were taught by the General line teachers and Rehbar-e-Talim teachers is 54.48 and 58.80, and the mean scores in Urdu of the students taught by the General line teachers and Rehbar-e-Talim teachers is 54.07 and 57.97, which shows that the performance of students taught by Rehbar-e-Talim teachers is better than students taught by the General line teachers. The p value for the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and General line teachers for the subject of Mathematics and Urdu is .056 and .061 respectively. Here, the p-value of .056 for mathematics is equal to alpha 0.05, which is statistically significant and hence the students taught by the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and General Line teachers, differ significantly in mathematics. But in case of Urdu, p value is .061 and is greater than alpha 0.05, which is statistically insignificant and hence the students taught by the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and the General Line teachers, does not differ significantly in Urdu.

**Table 3A: Group Statistics by using SPSS**

Subject/ year	Teacher type	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
Math (2013)	ReT	36	61.38	10.14	2.198	.031	Significant
	GT	39	56.76	7.99			
Urdu (2013)	ReT	36	59.36	7.93	1.751	.084	Insignifica nt
	GT	39	55.94	8.86			

**ReT – Rehbar-e-Talim teacher**

**GT – General Line teacher**

For the year 2013, the mean scores of the achievement tests in Mathematics of the students who were taught by the General line teachers and Rehbar-e-Talim teachers is 56.76 and 61.38, and the mean scores in Urdu is 55.94 and 59.36, which shows that the performance of students taught by Rehbar-e-Talim teachers is better than students taught by the General line teachers. The p value for the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and General line teachers for the subject of Mathematics and Urdu is .031 and .084 respectively. Again, the p-value of .031 for mathematics is less than alpha 0.05, which is statistically significant and hence the students taught by the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and General Line teachers, differ significantly in mathematics. But in case of Urdu, p value is .084 and is greater than alpha 0.05, which is statistically insignificant and hence the students taught by the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and the General Line teachers, does not differ significantly in Urdu.

### **Qualitative mode of analysis**

The data collected through the observation schedule were analyzed qualitatively and reflected that the methods used by both types of teachers for the teaching-learning process includes book reading and page writing. In both cases, the teaching-learning process was chorus based in which teachers read loudly and followed by the loud reading of the children. During the classroom observations, use of skills like introduction of the concept, use of activity by teacher, response of teacher towards student's queries, students individual differences looked after by teachers, feedback given by the teacher, Recaptulization done by the teacher, does not show any remarkable difference between Rehbar-e-Talim teachers and General Line teachers. However, Rehbar-e-Talim teachers were little better than General Line teachers in use of few pedagogical

skills and skills like relating things with real life experience, teacher role as a guide were used effectively by the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers. Thus, it can be concluded on the basis of the classroom observation schedule that Rehbar-e-Talim teachers were better to some extent than the General Line teachers.

## Conclusion

The study reveals that the Rehbar-e-Talim teachers (para teachers) overall perform better than the General line teachers. Besides, the hiring conditions, tenure and remuneration of Rehbar-e-Talim teachers vary from General line teachers; they are performing better than their counter part (General line teachers). Following may be the reason behind their high motivation and good performance, as the researcher perceived during the classroom observation period.

- Rehbar-e-Talim teachers are young and are highly motivated towards their job. They also think that they are more accountable to locals like VECs and hence, remain more committed towards their job. It could be the reason of their high motivation towards their job.
- The educational qualification of para teachers (Rehbar-e-Talim teachers) is generally higher than the Regular teachers (DISE Report, 2005; Kingdon 2010). It might influence their understanding about the teaching learning process.
- Rehbar-e-Talim teachers come from local community, therefore, they understand well the children and children feel also comfortable with them and since they are locals and hence come regularly to the school. It also affects the learning outcomes.

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